



HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS' FOUNDATION - USA

Member Organizations (Partial List)

Amer. Assn. of Jewish Holocaust Survivors of Greater Boston
Assn. of Holocaust Survivors from Former USSR, Los Angeles
California Assn. of Holocaust Child Survivors
C.A.N.D.L.E.S., Terre Haute, IN
Child Survivors of Arizona
Child Survivors Club of Palm Beach, FL
Coalition of Holocaust Survivor Clubs in South Florida
Council of Nazi Holocaust Survivor Organizations of So. California
Habonim Cultural Club, Miami
Holocaust Child Survivors & Friends of Greater Hartford
Holocaust Survivors of Greater Detroit
Holocaust Survivors of Greater Pittsburgh
Holocaust Survivors Group of Southern Nevada
Houston Council of Jewish Holocaust Survivors
The Jewish Holocaust Survivors & Friends of Greater Washington
Jewish Survivors of Latvia, Inc. New York
National Assn. of Jewish Child Holocaust Survivors, Inc.
New American Jewish Social Club, Miami
New Cracow Friendship Society, New York
Survivors of Atlantic City, NJ
Survivors of the Holocaust Asset Recovery Project, Seattle
Survivors of the Holocaust of New Mexico
Tikvah Acharay Hashoah, San Francisco

NEWS RELEASE

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Survivor Coalition in U.S. Calls for Full Public Access to Holocaust Documents

MIAMI -- The Executive Board of Holocaust Survivors' Foundation (HSF), a national coalition of Holocaust survivor groups, today called on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to allow full, unfettered public access via the internet to a huge collection of Nazi records it will be acquiring this year from an archive in Germany.

The HSF Board issued the following statement:

“The records of the International Tracing Service held in Bad Arolsen, Germany are of enormous personal importance to Survivors and the families of Holocaust victims the world over. They contain essential facts about our incarceration and persecution, and about the fate of our loved ones during that horrible period. For decades we have been frustrated over the lack of direct access to these files.”

“Now that the decision has been made to open the files and share them with designated research institutions, we are deeply concerned and dismayed to learn that the Holocaust Museum, as the receiving institution in the United States, would consider restricting access to these materials to on-site users in Washington D.C. or require persons to make inquiries only through Museum staff researchers.”

“Such an arrangement falls far short of genuine open access. It would, in effect, perpetuate the wall that has for so long blocked us, the survivors, and relatives of Holocaust victims who have sought information about their families' fates, from seeing these records with our own eyes and on our own terms.”

“We acknowledge and appreciate the Holocaust Museum's role in pressing for changes governing the release of the archived records which will allow the documents to be made available to survivors and families. We wholeheartedly supported this objective in recent months and helped bring the issue to the attention of the U.S. Congress. But the Museum's initial call for openness is at odds with the restrictions to access it now is proposing. We note that the amended agreement governing the records places no formal or legal restrictions on the Museum's dissemination of the information.”

More --

“JUSTICE AND DIGNITY FOR SURVIVORS”

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“This state of affairs demands greater openness and transparency, just like the Bad Arolsen archive. The International Tracing Service established an unjustifiable policy of secrecy and paternalism in the way it handled Survivor inquiries. We see this same pattern in the way Survivors are treated by the organizations charged with the responsibility for Holocaust restitutions. The results have been tragic on all fronts – we have been denied access to information about our families’ fates for over six decades, and our rights to recover family insurance policies, bank accounts, looted property, and compensation for slave labor have been overshadowed by the interests of governments, multinational corporations, and non-survivor organizations.”

Today, tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors worldwide live below or near poverty, without access to adequate food, shelter, medicine, health care, home care, dentures, eyeglasses, hearing aids, and other necessities. Family networks do not exist for most survivors in need, and government and private resources are inadequate. Unfortunately, many of the institutions that claim leadership in Jewish and Holocaust affairs are silent in the face of this tragedy, including the Museum.

“Now we do not even have assurance that we can recover vital information – in a direct and unregulated fashion – about what happened to our families. We are running out of time. We survivors are entitled to know all there is to know about the fate of our loved ones. Sixty two years after the end of World War II, it is time for the final walls to come down.”

“Therefore, we call on the leadership of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to publicly commit to providing direct, unrestricted and instantaneous internet access to the materials it acquires from the Bad Arolsen archive. The Museum has a moral and professional responsibility to use all available technologies to provide for the broadest possible public access to these materials.”

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Note:

HSF officers David Schaechter and Leo Rechter testified before a subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives’ Foreign Relations Committee on March 28, 2007 on the subject of opening of the Bad Arolsen archive and other Holocaust Survivor concerns. Testimony available at http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/sub_europe.asp